

Let light e'er shine on power, lest that power corrupt.

Searchlight in the WEST Breath of air on the way

FEW people would quibble with the Government's announcement yesterday that all new cars will have to run on lead-free petrol within a few years. It will make motoring a little more expensive — cars will cost slightly more, a few pence will be added to a gallon of petrol. More efficient engines will probably counter the costs involved. In any event it is a price worth paying for cleaner air, and for our peace of mind. Evidence about the effects of lead poisoning is still confusing.

Danger

The facts are disturbing enough to support the Government's action in phasing out leaded petrol, and stepping up the campaign to educate the public about the dangers of lead. But it is the danger from choking exhaust fumes which represents the biggest lead pollution threat. Removing that danger will cut poisoning to negligible levels, and help make Britain's fresh air even fresher.

Bomb toll

ONCE again it is the innocent who suffer in the Middle East. Yesterday's bomb outrage in Beirut killed and injured dozens of people, most of them totally unconnected with the American embassy. As the toll of dead and injured grew, so too did the condemnation of this cowardly attack. It makes the search for peace in the Middle East all the more urgent. President Reagan's initiative last September was a major step forward. The murderers who struck yesterday were hoping that the Americans' resolve will weaken. The time has now come for all sides to push the peace process forward with renewed vigour.

Parish threat

LOCAL government reorganisation was wasteful and largely unnecessary. Even those now in stewardship of the new councils set up in 1974 are prepared to admit that the old system was as good, or better. So what do we learn? Very little. Gloucester city council and Cheltenham borough council are attempting to hive off some of the villages lying on their outskirts. It makes administrative sense, they say — the familiar old argument. There is, however, one important fact to be remembered. The villagers of these threatened parishes do not want to be hived off. They prefer life as it is under their existing district councils. It is their views which should count. It has become a cliché of the Falklands that nothing will be done contrary to the wishes of the people. The circumstances in Gloucestershire may be very different, but the principle is exactly the same.

THE SHAPE OF TRAVEL TO COME?

FIFTEEN years ago, former naval engineer Francis Perrott came up with an idea which he believed could revolutionise Britain's public transport system.

But like so many good ideas his light weight railway, which was self-routing doing away with the need for points and micro-computers to drive and route the small carriages in city areas, was way ahead of its time.

The technology available at the time meant the scheme was uneconomic and Mr Perrott's idea had to be shelved in the back of his mind.

But it was not forgotten and three years ago, the University of Manchester's Institute of Science and Technology contacted him at his home in the Cotswold hamlet of South Cerney near Cirencester, to suggest the time was now right to have another try at his idea.

UMIST said they would support him in getting the Department of Industry to sponsor a feasibility study, which took a year and turned out to be extremely encouraging.

Now Mr Perrott and his small company Flyda have been given the go-ahead by the Government to build a trial railway in the Midlands, and if it proves successful, he will be in line for a £20 million contract to provide a transport system for London's Docklands scheme.

Not only does he believe that once he wins that order, urban authorities, including Bristol, will be clamouring for similar schemes, but that there is a potentially massive worldwide market.

The Flyda system would, he insists, cost about half the price of more conventional underground or metro schemes. The Government set aside about £60 million for the Docklands transport scheme, but Mr Perrott says his system would only cost about £30 million.

The Flyda rail system uses a very narrow steel or concrete bridge structure for the tracks, running above the ground, carrying light weight carriages.

Excitement

The beauty of the idea is the use of its invention — a simple and ingenious wheel which allows the train to select tracks at normal speed.

No moving parts are needed on the track itself. The tracks are a fraction of the size, weight and cost of conventional tracks, and operating costs are low and the whole system could blend into an urban landscape quite easily.

Each carriage can carry between 12 to 20 passengers and there are more doors than conventional tube trains allowing passengers to leave and enter much more quickly, speeding up the time.

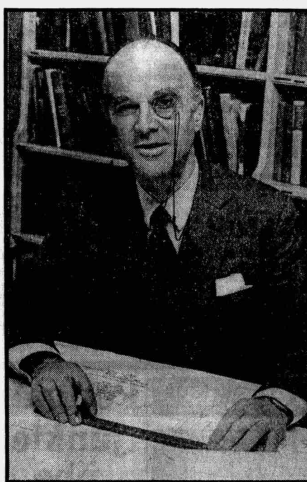
Mr Perrott believes about 20,000 vehicle building and engineering jobs could be created in Britain by 1990.

And at the age of 63, recognition of his skills will not be too late for a man who is brimming with energy and now that his idea is finally being given some credence.

In his comfortable and well lived in study, Mr

Boffin wants to put us on the right lines

by Beth Langdon



Above left: inventor Francis Perrott at work in his South Cerney home. Right: An artist's impression of the Flydaway in action. The system would be perfect for Bristol, he claims.

Perrott and his charming wife Yvonne, a former research scientist, almost bowl you over with their enthusiasm. They stagger into the room with boxes containing heavy scaled down models of the tracks, and the self routing train bogey, at that stage

intended for normal ground-level tracks. Then a model showing how the carriages switch tracks effortlessly is shown — but then, the best inventions always seem obvious after they are invented.

Mr Perrott was invalided out of the Royal Navy because of a hearing defect but has made a living as an engineering consultant and has done a lot of research work with gas turbines.

But you can imagine that for at least 15 years the thought that he had made a vitally important discovery but that it was simply not ready to put into gear, was frustrating.



Model of the Flydaway: A prototype is on the way.



Above left: inventor Francis Perrott at work in his South Cerney home. Right: An artist's impression of the Flydaway in action. The system would be perfect for Bristol, he claims.

They are eager to point out the sheer simplicity and ingenuity of the scheme and leave you wondering why no one has thought of it before — but then, the best inventions always seem obvious after they are invented.

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"Americans, in particular, are keen but a bit wary because they had their fingers burnt in the past."

"I am confident the test track will prove I am right and I am grateful to all the help I have received from the small, but extremely clever and loyal workforce within the company."

Major cities throughout the world are becoming increasingly clogged with traffic. Governments are desperate to find some sort of system to transport the masses from A to B without having to totally disrupt their cities by digging undergrounds — but they are also short of cash.

The beauty of Flyda is that it is above ground, on slender supports which do not mar the environment and it is comparatively cheap, but at the same time doing a better job than most conventional systems."

The test track is being built at Kidderminster and the carriages will also be British-made. As will be the micro-computers which will be housed in each carriage.

"As we are such a small and new company, we thought we would have problems getting the

scheme funded, but the Department of Trade has offered to back us if necessary and we have got a small firm guaranteed loan from the bank."

"We have taken out patents in more than 50 countries throughout the world, which should put us in an extremely good position," he said.

Pleaser controls are already using part of the system under licence. They have developed a sort of miniature version of the Flyda track to carry letters and parcels to about 500 different destinations in head post office sorting rooms.

Flyda's marketing director, Mr John Emmanuel, has also applied to the EPC for co-operation to market Flyda in Europe.

"I see a not too distant future where every city has this system. At the moment I have to admit that my idea is little more than technical drawings and scale models," said Mr Perrott.

"But shortly we shall be seeing the prototype taking shape, and I am confident that it will work."

BR's snub to the people who pay

I WAS interested to read the article on British Rail's withdrawal of Runabout tickets in the Western Region (Alarm At Axe On Rail Tickets, April 6).

The excuse offered was that the commuters were using them. It's obvious the travelling public are going to take advantage of any concessions offered. British Rail should realise that the poor suffering public have been milked for years, especially the commuters.

The public have got to pay for the strikes foisted

SUBSIDY FOR C.N.D. IS UNFAIR

I WAS not at all surprised to learn that Labour would withdraw Avon county council voted in favour of rates subsidy to the tune of £800 in respect of a CND school in Bristol.

Because of the way in which Tory controlled central government withdraws grants from county councils as expenditure exceeds its targets, the actual cost to ratepayers is likely to be much higher than the £800 quoted.

I have no particular axe to grind against the CND. I do not share their unilateral view, but because they have focused attention on the issues of nuclear weapons which is not a bad thing.

I am however against the use of public money for overtly political purposes.

Propaganda

Recently the Tory Government is considering spending £1 million on a propaganda campaign to put the pro-nuclear view, but backed down in the face of a public outcry.

Not much more than a month ago, Avon county council received an application from a member of the Electoral Reform Society for the use of the small county owned kiosk in Nailsea town centre.

The applicant intended to use the kiosk as a "polling station" in a mock general election.

The aims of the Electoral Reform Society has wide support across the political spectrum. The kiosk is to be used to allow voters to cast their vote in a polling station.

It would seem that the Tory councillors are only interested in people with their own political beliefs.

Perhaps it's a pity that more thought is not given by governing bodies to the good of the people and less to political one-upmanship.

E Jordan

Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire.

Joe Martin Liberal Alliance Candidate for Woodspring district council

The Chinese Nailsea Bristol.

Dear Mr Editor

on them by Duxton and his associates. Does British Rail remember the "famous words" when the railways were stupidly nationalised?

Railways were to be made a more efficient "public organisation" a pig's eye it's more efficient! There is now talk of some lines being returned to private enterprise.

Surely there must be a large number of ex-railwaymen who would jump at the chance to take part in a decent railway system.

British Rail does not care one iota about the public if it is not on a large main line route.

R Sutton Kingsway Road Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset.

Does the politician care?

READING the article Tories Attack Dismal Council (April 11), it seems to me a great pity that political parties cannot keep their noses out of local government affairs.

Councils should be running their affairs in the interests of all electors, regardless of those electors' political beliefs.

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stay in their own environment rather than being split between Rogie, Shirenewton and Langstone, which have no community links with the villages.

An area school would greatly reduce the amount of travelling involved for these children, and so the length of time that they are away from home; and consequently the transportation costs that are borne by the council.

Whereas if the proposed closures go through, all the children will be transported elsewhere to schools ad-infinitum, at ever increasing costs; and the community of Caerwent will lose their youngsters for ever.

Brian Connell Five Lanes House, Newport, Gwent.

More letters on page 10

MYSTERY OF THE FOX AND BADGER

THE worm writhed in apparent agony. But perhaps I am imposing my human feelings on to the poor creature for I understand his kind do not experience pain in the same way as we do.

To be sure the animal was uncomfortable as it thrashed around among the grass and I looked closer to spot a small white maggoty-looking beast encircling the worm like a ring around a finger.

Coarse

The maggot, as I shall call it, for as yet I have been unable to identify it positively, seemed to be biting at the worm.

And, indeed, as I sat there with one on part of the worm and then slipped underground. Not much more than a mystery, only a few moments later, disconcerted fox droppings consisting almost entirely of worms.

These were coarse in



Michael Woods' COUNTRY DIARY

texture and grey coloured and appeared almost like those from the winter coat of a red deer.

In among them were a few hairs that I could positively identify — black tipped and rooted with light grey between, they had belonged to a badger. How they had been ingested by the fox is pure surmise.

Foxes will apparently kill badger cubs on occasion although this is the exception rather than the rule, but the hairs I found were not cub's but those of an adult.

Almost invariably, an adult badger with its vicious jaws and heavy weight will beat a fox if they come to blows.

Perhaps the fox had found a dead badger, part of which it had eaten as carrion? The droppings are to be examined by experts and

hopefully a more revealing answer will be available in due course.

It is a pleasure in one afternoon were quite enough and it was a pleasure simply to record the appearance of both coltsfoot and kingcups.

The former with its slightly dandelion-like flower (no relation) is a lover of bare ground.

Plumage

The flowers, some of the earliest to appear in the spring, come up well before the leaves which, when they do unfurl, have a slight resemblance to the hoofprint of a small horse.

A flitting of wings and a bobbing flight from one ant hill to another, the white flash was a giveaway — a wheatear.

The male is an especially handsome bird with slate grey back, white eyebrows and chestnut breast and belly, but both sexes have the characteristic white tail plumage.

This is the first summer migrant that I have noted this year and I look forward keenly to recording others in the coming weeks.



Bridge by David Hamilton

Making a bid just to hear the sound of your voice rarely pays off and on this deal from the 1983 Charity Challenge Cup it cost dearly.

Dealer North
Lose A

S 10
H 842
D K995
AK987

S KJ852
H 1013
D 108
C 963

S 743
H 743
D A62
C 1104

S A99
H Q196
D 109
C 52

If South decides to bid his rubbishly spades he may well end up in a bad but — at pairs — highly profitable contract of 3NT, as long as West doesn't lead spades. A more normal contract of 5C by North will lead to a more interesting choice of plays. The likely lead



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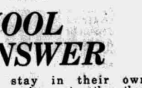
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